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THE ORIGIN OF GENET'S PROJECTED ATTACK ON LOUISIANA AND THE FLORIDAS

FROM the point of view of the foreign relations and particularly of the maintenance and expansion of the territorial basis of the United States, the decade from 1793 to 1803 was a critical period in American history. To one who appreciates the importance of the possession of the Mississippi Valley and its approaches in the history and destiny of the United States, these years are alive with interest. It was in this decade that Wayne's victory turned the tide against the Indians in the Northwest, and Jay's treaty relieved it of English occupation; then it was that Spain's intrigues with Indian scalping parties and Kentucky malcontents, her claims in the Southwest, and her closure of the Mississippi to the products of the West, came to an end. At the close of the decade the nation, having thus secured its flanks, took its gigantic march across the Mississippi by the Louisiana Purchase.

One of the gravest of the dangers of this period, however, has not received the attention which its importance warrants. The mission of Genet has been chiefly considered as a matter of his own personality, in the effects which his enthusiasm and his democratic societies produced upon party crystallization, and in regard to his demands for money and the use which he made of our ports.¹ His picturesque effrontery in lecturing the government and his threatened appeal from Washington to the people, have perhaps concealed from us the most important feature of his mission, namely the desire of the French Republic to form connections with the frontiersmen of America and to seize Louisiana, the Floridas and Canada as a part of the same enthusiastic crusade for liberty that carried the French armies across the European frontiers in the early days of the Revolution. In this case France reckoned upon the active support or the connivance of the American people, and particularly upon the irate Kentuckians, to aid her in repelling the hated Spaniard from the approaches to the Mississippi and perhaps from both Americas. It was an attractive programme. The enthusiasm for revolutionary France, and the Western resentment

¹ Dr. von Holst, *Constitutional History of the United States*, I. 113-120, has used DeWitt, *Thomas Jefferson*, to put the main purpose of France in a clearer light; but he does not go at any length into the Western intrigue.

against the power that closed the Mississippi, made it possible that this fierce young French Republic, strong with the zeal of the Revolution, might be able to succeed the decadent Spanish monarchy on the Gulf of Mexico, and hold the gratitude and friendship of the men of the West. What this transfer under such conditions might have meant, European history in the years that soon followed may enable us to guess. But in the way of this outcome stood George Washington. By throwing the weight of a vigorous policy and his powerful influence in favor of strict adherence to the duty of neutrality, he blocked the plan of France and performed one of the greatest of his services to America.

It is not strange that France in her revolutionary renaissance, and when war was about to be declared upon England and Spain, should have turned her eyes toward the remains of her colonial glory in Canada and Louisiana. Indeed it is one of the significant elements in her policy during the War of Independence that she never lost sight of the weakness of Spain, or of the advisability of keeping the United States a dependent ally, restricted within the limits of the Alleghanies. Her statesmen were well aware of the looseness of the federal bond in the Confederation and of the disaffection of the West. Memoirs for the recovery of Louisiana were framed for presentation to the government of the Old Régime. In 1787 Lord Dorchester sent home from Canada a copy of a memoir¹ presented to the French minister in the United States and by him forwarded to his court. The object of its author was to induce France to retake Louisiana. He argued that separation was the inevitable destiny of the West. "Unity," he said, "is broken by the Mountains. Those beyond seek for a new support and they offer to the power which will welcome them, advantages which will before long efface those which America, as it now is, could promise. These may be seen at a glance, from the Appalaches to the mountains of New Mexico, and from the Lakes of Canada to the mouth of the Mississippi. Here is a zone of the globe capable of containing fifty million inhabitants, situated in a continuous plain, inclosed in the same compass, of which all the parts have a close connection, a common and indivisible point of trade and navigation. In a few years will be born a new policy, and it is a colony not yet perceived which will hatch the germ. It requires a protector; the first who will stretch out his arms to it will have made the greatest acquisition that could be desired in this New World. Fortunate my country

¹ *Report Canadian Archives*, 1890, pp. 108-117. See also Report of Historical Manuscripts Commission, in the *Report of the American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 946, 947.

if she does not let this moment escape, one of those not presented twice."

This discontent of the West and the weakness of the ties that bound it to the coast had also been shown in proposals by malcontents to England¹ and to Spain. General Wilkinson, the most consummate artist in treason that the nation ever possessed, received Spanish money for his efforts to carry Kentucky from the Union, and even George Rogers Clark, the conqueror of the Illinois country in the famous campaign of 1778 and 1779, had desired in 1788 to take service under Spain in return for a liberal land grant. Clark was disgusted with the neglect which Virginia and the United States gave to his claims. His friend and adviser in this period was Dr. James O'Fallon, a Revolutionary soldier, who later married Clark's youngest sister. One of the famous Yazoo land companies² which purchased from Georgia a part of her western claims, was the South Carolina Yazoo Company, of which the active agent was this Dr. O'Fallon. Since the colony was to be located in the region of the present Vicksburg, in territory claimed by Spain, O'Fallon attempted to conciliate that power by assuring Governor Miro that the colonists had been led to "consent to be the slaves of Spain, under the appearance of a free and independent colony, forming a rampart for the adjoining Spanish territories and establishing with them an eternal reciprocal alliance, offensive and defensive." In this proposed separation from the Union, it was rumored

¹ Professor J. F. Jameson has called my attention to an interesting proposition of this period made to the British authorities.

In a letter of Phineas Bond, British Consul in Philadelphia, written to the Foreign Secretary, the Duke of Leeds, and dated January 3, 1791, he says: "In case of a rupture with Spain, my Lord, it may become an object of consideration with Government how far the Spanish settlements on the Mississippi near the mouth of that river might be accessible to [a] force collected near the Ohio and conveyed down the rivers in craft calculated for that purpose. Perhaps it might be deemed too hazardous an undertaking to engage in an enterprise of this sort without the concurrence of the United States, nor could such a concurrence be expected but upon [the basis] of stipulations reciprocally beneficial yet it may [be] expedient to observe, my Lord, that the western settl[ements] have constantly murmured at the restrictions laid upon their exports, thro' the medium of the Mississippi, by the Court of Spain. It is but reasonable to suppose . . . would favor nay co-operate in any measure that m[ight] tend to secure them a free trade which the uninter[upted] passage of the Mississippi would effectually establish.

"The settlers, my Lord, upon the whole frontier of the United States are a hardy race of men. Adventurers by profession, and ready to seize every opportunity of profit or employment. I could not presume, my Lord, to delineate the plan of such an enterprize tho' I can not restrain a suggestion which may be improved by others more conversant with subjects of this nature." Compare England's intrigue with Miranda in John Adams' administration.

² Haskins, "Yazoo Land Companies," *Papers of the American Historical Association*, V. 69, 71, 72.

that George Rogers Clark had been selected as chief in command of the battalion which O'Fallon organized. In 1790, "it was expected in Lexington that General Scott would take five hundred families to the settlement and that Wilkinson and Sevier would follow, each with a thousand fighting men and their families. General McDowell accompanies the Franklins from the Long Island, where they are to embark with 300 from the back parts of North Carolina and 200 with Capt. Alston from Cumberland." Washington's proclamation and the prospect of the use of force, together with Spanish opposition, put an end to the project; but the reports about the expedition reveal unmistakable symptoms. The frontiersmen were about to advance. Their produce was useless if the Mississippi were closed. They were weary of the incessant Indian war on their borders. The federal government discouraged their attacks on the savages and appeared indifferent to the closing of navigation by Spain. To the frontiersmen the essential thing was relief from this intolerable situation. The new government had not yet approved its value to them; the future of a united nation extending from Atlantic to Pacific appealed less to their imagination than did the pressing need of themselves possessing the portals of the great valley which they occupied. There appeared to be two solutions of the difficulty, either to come to an agreement with Spain, which would open the Mississippi, stop the Indian raids and furnish them with liberal land-grants, or to fight their way out. In either case Spain would not long have withstood this hardy backwood stock. While thus the West seethed with intrigues, with projects of colonization in Spanish territory and with yearnings for war, there came the reports of the wars of the French Revolution and perhaps intimations of the policy of France with respect to the Spanish dependencies in America.¹

It is, therefore, not at all surprising that at Christmas time, in 1792, General Clark and Dr. O'Fallon concerted a plan for an attack on Louisiana under the French flag. This proposition, together with a private letter from O'Fallon to his friend Thomas Paine, then a member of the Convention, would seem to have reached France before Genet sailed.² In the meantime, and entirely

¹ Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, III. 157; Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Ford, I. 216.

² At least that careful Western student, Dr. Lyman C. Draper, in a note to the George Rogers Clark Manuscripts, in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, mentions that Paine wrote in answer to O'Fallon, from Passy, February 17, 1793, conveying the idea that Clark's application had gone through the medium of the French minister to the United States and that the proposal had been laid before the Provisional Executive Council of the Republic. However this may have been, Clark, as we shall see later, learning of Genet's mission, wrote to him (February 2, 1793), and this letter was received by the minister on

independently, the French government was devoting attention to the project of operations in America. Brissot de Warville, one of the leaders of the Girondins, or Brissotins, was a warm admirer of America. In 1788 he had traveled in the United States, and he brought the fruits of his observations into his *Nouveau Voyage dans les États-Unis* (Paris, 1791). He had noted the discontent of the Westerners over Spain's closure of the Mississippi. "They are determined," he wrote, "to open it with good will or by force; and it would not be in the power of Congress to moderate their ardor. Men who have shook off the yoke of Great Britain, and who are masters of the Ohio and the Mississippi, cannot conceive that the insolence of a handful of Spaniards can think of shutting rivers and seas against a hundred thousand free Americans. The slightest quarrel will be sufficient to throw them into a flame; and if ever the Americans shall march toward New Orleans, it will infallibly fall into their hands." Brissot pressed for the war with Austria, and as the current of the revolution hastened towards a general European conflict, he became more and more interested in the problems of foreign relations. Saint Just afterward declared, in his report on the proscribed Girondin deputies (July 9, 1793), that "the attention of Brissot extended to the other hemisphere, Brissot ruled the Council." It was partly due to his influence that Lebrun was made minister of foreign relations in the summer of 1792. Another intimate friend of Brissot was Clavière, the Genevese banker, who became minister of finance in the spring of the same year. He had accompanied Brissot in one of his journeys through America, and was, with him, the author of the works, *De la France et des États-Unis* (London, 1787) and *Commerce of America with Europe*. Otto, chief secretary of a division of Lebrun's office, had been private secretary to Luzerne, during his American mission, and was later chargé d'affaires in the United States, from which he returned in 1792. Otto declared, in 1797, that Brissot, who had unlimited influence in the diplomatic circle, proposed Genet as minister to the United States.¹ Thus the innermost circles of the Girondist authorities were strongly affected by American influence.

Lebrun was now considering the probability of a war with Spain; Miranda, who had visited the United States soon after the War of Independence, and whose South American exploits were to make him famous, had come to confer with him about the project of a

his arrival in this country; and with his answer (July 12), Genet forwarded Paine's reply to Dr. O'Fallon's letter. Conway, *Life of Paine*, II. 156; *Report of the American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 967, n. 2; 986, 987, 996, 1007.

¹ Archives des Affaires Étrangères, États Unis., Vol. 47, folio 401.

revolution in the Spanish colonies. Brissot desired to make use of Miranda, aided by over 30,000 San Domingo troops. But more moderate plans were chosen. Lebrun decided to send Genet to the United States, with a secret mission to foment the revolution (Lebrun to Dumouriez, November 6, 1792).¹ Jefferson afterwards noted that Col. W. S. Smith,² who left Paris November 9, 1792, reported that they were sending Genet here, and that "the ministers told him they meant to begin the attack [on the Spanish colonies] at the mouth of the Mississippi, and to sweep along the bay of Mexico, southwardly, and that they would have no objections to our incorporating into our government the two Floridas." Dumouriez wrote to Lebrun (November 30, 1792) that "once masters of Holland we shall be strong enough to crush England, particularly by interesting the United States in sustaining our colonies, and in executing a superb project of General Miranda."³

A vast and startling project, indeed! sweeping into a single system the campaigns of France in Europe, the discontented frontiersmen of the Mississippi valley, and the revolutionary unrest that was before long to give independence to Spanish America. The historical possibilities of the great design are overwhelming.

Around Brissot and his party leaders in the fall of 1792 and the spring of 1793, there were also gathered a group of well known Americans. Among them was the famous Thomas Paine, keen of scent for revolutionary breezes, whose relations with his old-time friend in the American War for Independence, Dr. O'Fallon, we have already mentioned, and here, too, was Joel Barlow, the poet, whose *Vision of Columbus* lives, at least in the history of American literature, and the promoter, whose notorious Scioto Land Company

¹ Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, III. 157; *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1860, p. 589.

² The Minister of Public Contributions reports to the Provisory Executive Council, January 4, 1793: "I have given information to the citizen Genet of the offers made by Col. Smith, of New York, to procure the republic not only the reimbursement of what remains due from the United States, although not yet payable, but also the application of it, either to supplies for the army, or wheat flour and salted provisions in augmentation of our internal supplies." This proposal was approved by the council, in a letter to Colonel Smith, November 7, 1792; and the minister notes that by the time of his report (considered on January 4, 1793) Smith had gone to England. *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, I. 144. Jefferson's minute of the interview with Col. Smith was dated February 20, 1793 (*Jefferson, Writings*, I. 216). Col. W. S. Smith was the son-in-law of John Adams. He had been aide-de-camp to Washington, and secretary of legation under Adams in London, where he was on intimate terms with Miranda. His connection with the Miranda project of 1798, when Great Britain took somewhat the rôle towards Spanish America that France now essayed, is well known. See John Adams, *Works*, I. 679; VIII., X., *passim*; *Edinburgh Review*, XIII. 277 ff. Col. Smith may have given Jefferson an understanding of the inception of the plan.

³ Sorel, III. 175.

lives in the history of American settlement. Brissot aided him in this land scheme, which lured unfortunate French emigrants to Gallipolis, and, later, Barlow was the translator of Brissot's *Travels*.¹ Both Paine² and Barlow were enjoying their recent honors as naturalized citizens of France. Gilbert Imlay was another of the group,—that soldier of the American Revolution, and of fortune, who had brought his Kentucky observations into the *Topographical Description of the Western Territories of America* (London, 1792). He was living with Mary Wollstonecraft, afterwards the mother of Shelley's wife (Mary Godwin), and his perfidy is embalmed in her *Letters to Imlay*. In Paine's home, an old mansion of Madame de Pompadour, we find, a little later, gatherings in which the Brissots, Bonneville, Barlow, Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Rolands met. Less influential, perhaps, but active also, in promoting the interest of the government in American affairs was Stephen Sayre, a native of Long Island, New York, who after graduating at Princeton had become a banker in London, and later, sheriff. His enthusiasm for the War of Independence ruined his fortunes in London and he attached himself for a time to Franklin and to Arthur Lee. At this time we find him, with Beaupoils, a French officer who had served in Poland, engaged in promoting the plan of an expedition against Louisiana. Lyonnet, a Frenchman who had lived in New Orleans, and who had influence with the Gironde leaders, contributed valuable information concerning the discontented settlers in the old capital of Louisiana. Such were the influences at work in Paris at the period when George Rogers Clark, at the Falls of the Ohio, was brooding over the wrongs imposed on him by the Virginia legislature³ and considering plans for expatriation and the reduction of Louisiana.

It was in the summer of 1792 that there returned to Paris, fresh from his Russian mission, that ruddy, bustling brother of Madame Campan, the friend and companion of Marie Antoinette. Genet had been destined for Holland, but, as we have seen, he was determined upon in November for the United States, when Lebrun and Dumouriez were embracing all Spanish America in their designs. Genet himself seems afterwards to have desired it to be understood that the friendly relations which his family bore to the Queen had led to his selection as agent to carry out the plan of some of the Girondists for deporting Louis to the United States and thus avoid-

¹ See Barlow's proposal in 1793 to take the contract for the conquest of Louisiana himself, on a business basis, *American Historical Review*, III. 508.

² Conway, *Life of Paine*, II. 64.

³ Clark learned of the failure of his claims in the Virginia courts and legislature in November, 1792. 53 Clark MSS., 81.

ing execution by exile. Mr. Moncure D. Conway quotes from Genet's papers in his possession this interesting statement: "Roux Facillac, who had been very intimate in my father's family at Versailles, met me one morning and wished me to spend the evening at Lebrun's, where I had been invited. He accompanied me there and we met Brissot, Guadet, Leonnet [Lyonnet?], Ducos, Fauchet, Thomas Paine and most of the Gironde leaders . . . Tom Paine, who did not pretend to understand French, took no part in the conversation, and sat quietly sipping his claret. 'Ask Paine, Genet,' said Brissot, 'what effect the execution of Capet would have in America?' Paine replied to my inquiry by simply saying, 'bad, very bad.' The next day Paine presented to the convention his celebrated letter demanding in the name of Liberty and the people of the United States that Louis should be sent to the United States. . . . 'Genet,' continued Lebrun, 'how would you like to go to the United States and take Capet and his family with you?'"¹

This anecdote is interesting as showing the kind of gatherings in progress at this time, though it bears internal evidence of apparent inaccuracy, at least, since Paine's speech was made on the fifteenth of January, 1793, and Genet's instructions had been first made out in December, although they were supplemented by additional instructions on January 17.²

Genet's instructions³ recite that at the moment when he is sent to the United States, a rupture with England and Spain is imminent. He is, therefore, to endeavor to secure a treaty establishing a close concert for the extension of the empire of liberty, guaranteeing the sovereignty of the peoples, and punishing the powers which have an exclusive commercial and colonial system by declaring that the vessels of these powers shall not be received in the ports of the contracting nations. This compact, it was urged, would conduce rapidly to the freeing of Spanish America, to the opening of the navigation of the Mississippi to the inhabitants of Kentucky, "to the deliverance of our ancient brothers of Louisiana from the tyrannic yoke of Spain, and perhaps to the uniting to the American constellation of the fair star of Canada." In case, however, the course of the United States is wavering and timid, and if they do not determine to make common cause with France, Genet is to take all measures which his position permits, to propagate the principles of

¹ Conway, *Writings of Thomas Paine*, IV., p. xii.

² On the sixteenth of January, Clavière wrote two letters to Jefferson regarding Genet's mission. Jefferson Correspondence, Department of State, Series 2, Vol. 16, No. 88; *Bulletin of Bureau of Rolls*, No. 8, p. 119.

³ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 957, 960; Aulard, *Recueil des Actes du Comité de Salut Public*, I. 361, 393 n., 478.

the French Revolution in Louisiana and in the other provinces of America adjoining the United States. The Kentuckians, who had long burned with the desire for the navigation of the Mississippi, it was noted, would probably second Genet's efforts without compromising Congress. Genet was accordingly authorized to keep agents in Kentucky, and to send them to Louisiana. He was also to make the expenditures which he judged necessary for the execution of this project. Blank brevets of officers up to the rank of captain, for bestowal on Indian chiefs, were entrusted to him.

Delays in getting to sea kept him at the harbor of Rochefort¹ until about the last week of February, 1793.² Between the date of Lebrun's letter to Dumouriez (November 6, 1792) on the day of the victory of Jemmapes (announcing the purpose to attack the Spanish colonies), and the time of Genet's departure, important events had occurred. The declaration by the French people of their readiness to wage war for all peoples upon their kings³ had been followed by the execution of Louis.⁴ Four days later the Executive Council assigned to Brissot a report on the possibility of an expedition against the Spanish dependencies.⁵ On the thirtieth of January, the council had ordered that Genet's departure be hastened.⁶ War was declared against England on the first of February, and the declaration of war against Spain⁷ was inevitable. The new minister to the United States left France, fired with the enthusiasm and the great designs of the days of Dumouriez.

It was forty-eight days before Genet, driven out of his course by adverse winds, reached Charleston.⁸ In the meantime the foreign office was receiving plans from the Americans in Paris for effecting the reduction of Louisiana by the aid of the Kentucky riflemen. Several of these plans were in the hands of the government before the date of Genet's departure. His instructions and later actions in America are therefore to be read in the light of this fact.

One of the earliest as well as one of the most interesting of the communications is an anonymous draft, endorsed 1792.⁹ The writer says that he had hoped, in vain, to interest the old French government in the recovery of Louisiana, and he refers to a memoir con-

¹ Near La Rochelle.

² Genet to Lebrun, April 16, 1793, Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 27, folio 217, and appendix to DeWitt, *Thomas Jefferson* (Paris, 1861); Hamilton, *Republic*, V. 247.

³ November 19, 1792.

⁴ January 21, 1793.

⁵ Aulard, *Recueil*, II. 10; III. 82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 27.

⁷ Made March 9, 1793.

⁸ April 8, 1793.

⁹ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 945.

taining his views, the result of researches during five years. Putting aside as chimerical the Miranda idea of revolutionizing the more southern regions of Spanish America, he urges the Louisiana project as easy to carry out, owing to the weakness of the garrisons (not over 1500 men, he believed) and the temper of the French inhabitants. He also points out the value of the conquest as a diversion which would alarm Spain into devoting troops to the defense of her other American frontiers, and as a means of checking Spanish privateers. The measures for inaugurating this movement were, in the opinion of the writer, secretly to send three or four French military men, including Lyonnet, to Philadelphia; to send an emissary by way of Philadelphia to New Orleans; to give to Genet the powers concerning the employment of these commissioners and charge him with the responsibility of the expedition; and to send revolutionary agents to Kentucky, to the colonies of Marietta and Scioto and Cumberland, promising the free navigation of the Mississippi. He would give to the expedition the guise of a filibustering raid in order to avoid compromising the government of Kentucky, and he advised that General Wilkinson (!) be made the commander-in-chief. The emissaries were to assemble five hundred men at different points on the Ohio, brought together by hope of booty and of confiscated Spanish lands. To cover these proceedings they were to take the appearance of an expedition against the Indians. The commander-in-chief should be empowered to make a treaty of alliance between France and Louisiana. The total expense he reckoned at 400,000 livres. Taking up the important question of the relation of this expedition to the United States, the author puts the questions, whether the leaders of the Republic should be acquainted with the plans; whether Louisiana ought to be united to France or to the United States; and how to avoid compromising the neutrality of the United States. Ten years before, he says, America would have welcomed the independence of Louisiana as infinitely desirable, for then they had the enthusiasm of liberty; but the enjoyment of it has made them calmer, and they no longer regard liberty like lovers, but like married persons; reflection guides them, but it cools them. He then develops the argument that nature has destined a separation of the West, and that Congress is reluctant to secure the navigation of the Mississippi from Spain, lest this separation be facilitated. While, therefore, Genet ought adroitly to sound the disposition of the leaders of the government regarding the union of Louisiana with the United States, the envoy should speak of this merely as desirable, and should dispose them to receive with satisfaction the news of French success. By attrib-

uting the expedition to the disquietude of French settlers on the Scioto, Genet would enable the government to disavow the expedition and save the neutrality of the United States. The orders of Congress to courts of justice to act against the leaders of the invasion, on the remote frontiers, were not to be feared. He reaches the conclusion that the expedition should ignore the United States, and that the co-operating force should be found in Kentucky and along the Ohio ; and he names among those whose aid is desirable, Wilkinson, Tardiveau (the brother of the late commandant of Kaskaskia) and Brackenridge. He leaves the future relations of Louisiana to be settled by the situation of France after the peace, but he expresses his opposition to uniting it to the United States.

In the same year Captain Imlay contributed observations, in which he enforced the commercial and strategic importance of Louisiana to France and her West Indian islands.¹ The expedition could, in his opinion, be carried out by France for 750,000 livres, but Imlay adds that if this is too considerable an expenditure, Genet should be left to his discretion to find men in the West to undertake the expedition at their own cost and risk. This he declares to be entirely possible if they are assured that France will furnish assistance.²

From these plans and instructions prior to Genet's departure, it is evident that whatever Genet's impetuosity and maladroitness may have done to damage the French project, he cannot be charged with having undertaken an unauthorized expedition. The essential features of the plan he attempted to carry out were those of the government and its advisers. His mistakes were of method rather than of object.³ Nevertheless, Genet was not without warnings from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴ Lebrun distinctly cautioned him that the cold character of Americans only warms by degrees, and that the negotiations with the government must be secret. He was advised to have entire confidence in the sentiments of the President and Jefferson, Butler and Madison. His instructions, furthermore, enjoined upon him to follow scrupulously the forms established for official communications between the government and the agents of foreign states, and to give no offense with regard to pro-

¹ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 953; *American Historical Review*, III. 491.

² Imlay mentions a report on the expedition presented to the Executive Committee by Lebrun ; and the value of Imlay's advice regarding the expedition is vouched for by Brissot. *American Historical Review*, III. 503.

³ Lebrun to Genet, March 10, 1793; DeWitt, *Jefferson*, 517. Lebrun was opposed to the United States securing the freedom of the Mississippi by negotiation.

⁴ Lebrun to Genet, February 24, 1793; Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 37, fo. 132.

visions of the Constitution of the United States. But he was advised to exert an influence on public sentiment, and he was informed that the indirect ways were more useful than the official approaches. The difficulty with these requirements lay, not merely in Genet's impetuous character, and the party conflicts in America; it lay also in the fact that, as the event proved, Washington pursued a genuine and vigorous policy of neutrality, and thus Genet had to choose between abandonment of his project and a conflict with the authorities. The President neither consented to aid France, nor to engage in an intrigue which provided for avowing neutrality, while permitting the frontier to follow the flag of France. The people, moreover, in the last resort, were loyal to Washington.

The plans submitted to the French authorities increased in number and detail in the early days of March, when that nation declared war against Spain. Among others, the former resident of New Orleans, Lyonnet, presented elaborate expositions of the advantages of Louisiana and the condition of the Spanish posts along the Mississippi. He believed that Louisiana should be joined to the United States. Six persons, he thought, should be sent to Philadelphia to proceed to Kentucky on the pretext of buying lands, but really to arrange matters in the West. He recommended Tardiveau as able to suggest useful men in Kentucky, and he wrote: "At the head of these filibusters of the woods, must be placed General [Clark], who in the late war took Vincennes, among other posts. His name alone is worth hosts, and there is no American who has not confidence in him." Among the expenses he notes that much must be spent for drink, "for the Americans only talk of war when vis-à-vis with a bowl."¹

On the fourth of March, Sayre and Beaupoils, already mentioned, together with Pereyrat, offered to Lebrun a plan,² the substance of which they had communicated to Dumouriez, probably in the early summer of 1792, while he was still minister of foreign affairs. Referring, doubtless, to the Miranda project, they declare that, in the present juncture, a fleet and a formidable army cannot properly be devoted to the expedition, but they present a plan, which would also have the ultimate aim of seizing Mexico and creating a revolt in South America.³ The uprising in Louisiana, which their project was designed to effect, would afford a beginning for such further designs, in harmony with the larger proposals, as might be

¹ Archives, Louisiane et Florides, 1792 à 1803, Vol. 7, docts. 4 and 5; Espagne, Vol. 635, docts. 316, 317; Vol. 636, folios 37, 101, 205; *American Historical Review*, III. 496-505.

² *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 954.

³ Compare *id.*, p. 945, and *American Historical Review*, III. 496.

deemed expedient by the government ; and it would in itself compel Spain to send vessels and troops to America to intercept a general revolt of the Spanish provinces. In Kentucky, they declared, were a large part of Washington's officers and soldiers, and the desire for the freedom of the Mississippi, and the hope of glory and profit from such an expedition against Spain, would attract them. A few boats, batteries and munitions, together with supplies for two months for 3000 men, were needed. The boats could be built at the Falls of the Ohio. The French of Louisiana would embrace the opportunity to revolt ; but if the taking of New Orleans was not deemed important, the tributaries of the Mississippi would open a way to Mexico, and the Panuco Indians, lately ill-treated by Spain, could be counted on to aid. An important consideration, in the opinion of the memorialists, was that such an expedition, made without the consent of the United States, would lead inevitably to an attitude on the part of England and Spain which would force the United States to take part with France, particularly since the Americans knew that the English were the authors of the Indian war then in progress in the United States. An expenditure of 280,000 livres, exclusive of artillery and ammunition, would suffice for the expedition, and the agent of the Republic could draw upon the treasury of the United States to meet these expenses ; the modesty of this sum would conceal the secret.

While these plans were offered to Lebrun, a project for the formation of a committee to arrange for the expedition was also considered. For membership in this the proposition suggested : Joel Barlow, "a true friend of liberty, a philosopher, and pure in his morals," who might have, under Genet, the general direction of the matter, as well as the management of the funds ; Sayre, who (owing, perhaps, to his London sojourn), should be well watched ; and Beaupoils and Lyonnet. These four were to be sent to Philadelphia to begin the formation of the committee, having first concerted their plans with Otto. This project also provided that a part of the money due from the United States to France should be devoted to the enterprise. It was expected that these men would prepare the revolt of the Spanish colonies, which Miranda would complete, and they were to act in concert with a Mexican who had written to Clavière regarding the expedition.

Some contemporary comments ¹ upon several of these plans (made apparently by one of the French authorities), declare that Mexico and the Spanish colonies should not be thought of again. And, in fact, in the United States as well as in France, the larger aspects of

¹ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 945, n. 3.

the original design seem at least to have been left to await the outcome of the operations in Louisiana and the Floridas.

But in France domestic and foreign troubles followed fast in the weeks that succeeded the declaration of war against Spain. The loss of Belgium, the defection of Dumouriez, the revolt in La Vendée, the formation of the Committee of Public Safety, and the struggle between the Girondins and the Mountain, culminated in the downfall of the Girondins on the second of June, 1793. Genet had, therefore, hardly reached Philadelphia and begun active operations, when his party friends were in prison or in flight. That awful summer, with civil war, military reverses, a dozen countries in arms against France, and the reign of terror in her midst, was no time for attention to remote or widely extended plans of conquest in another hemisphere, even if the Jacobins had desired to sustain Genet. The interest in the expedition turns, therefore, to the United States.

At Charleston, Genet at once communicated the plan that had been drawn up to Governor Moultrie, the well-known Revolutionary leader. Genet and the consul, Mangourit, both report that a complete confidence existed between them and "this venerable veteran, the sincere friend of our Revolution." Genet informed Lebrun in his first dispatch¹ that Moultrie had rendered all the good offices in his power, permitting him to arm privateers, and furnishing him useful information on various parts of his instructions. Moultrie favored combined action by the United States, and was impressed by the advantage that the freedom of Louisiana would afford in checking the Indian attacks instigated by Spain,² and in opening the Mississippi. Mangourit impressed upon him the idea that all that France would gain from the expedition would be the weakening of the enemy, while the substantial advantages would be with the United States.³ A few days later the consul visited Savannah to talk with General Mackintosh and others afterward engaged in the expedition against Florida. So far from concealing the purpose of this visit from Moultrie, he induced that obliging official to grant him letters of introduction. Throughout his correspondence, Mangourit shows a steady confidence in Moultrie's good will, even after the latter became dissatisfied with Genet, and officially proclaimed the policy of neutrality for South Carolina.⁴ Moultrie's private secretary, Freneau, was said to be a brother of Jefferson's translating clerk, the editor of the *National Gazette*.

¹ April 16, 1793, Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 37, fo. 217; De Witt, *Thomas Jefferson*, Appendix.

² *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 987.

³ Archives, États-Unis, Supp. Vol. 5, doct. 9 (1790-1813), Mangourit to Genet, April 24, 1793.

⁴ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I. 310.

Thus Genet's brief visit to Charleston had sufficed to set in action the Florida side of the intrigue, which he left in the hands of the energetic Mangourit. While the minister was travelling by land to Philadelphia, amid the jubilations of the democratic admirers of France, Washington and his cabinet were considering the attitude of the United States toward neutrality and our treaty with France. As early as the twentieth of February, 1793, as we have seen,¹ Jefferson had received from Col. Smith intimations of the French project and of Genet's mission. On the seventeenth of January, Clavière had written to him of the minister's coming, and on the twenty-third of March, Jefferson, with Washington's approval, had drafted instructions² for Carmichael and Short, our commissioners to Spain. These instructions mention the desire of France to offer independence to the Spanish-American colonies, beginning with those on the Mississippi, and that she would not object to our receiving those of the east side into our confederacy. The proper course, Jefferson observed, was to keep ourselves free to act according to circumstances and not to guarantee the Spanish colonies. The idea of providing for a guaranty of Louisiana on condition of the cession of the Floridas was abandoned, because when it was originally thought of we apprehended it would be seized by Great Britain, who would thus completely encircle us with her colonies and fleets. "This danger," he adds, "is now removed by the concert between Great Britain and Spain; and the times will soon enough give independence, and consequently free commerce to our neighbors, without our risking the involving of ourselves in a war for them."

The proclamation issued by Washington on the twenty-second of April required the pursuance of a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent powers. Jefferson, while acquiescing as a matter of expediency,³ nevertheless regarded the proclamation as pusillanimous.⁴ Large masses of the people of Philadelphia were bitterly opposed to the President's policy, and rioting was imminent at the very seat of government. This was, then, the situation at the opening of Genet's mission. The Democratic-Republican forces of the country desired a liberal construction of our treaty obligations with France, and the most friendly relations, if not positive alliance, with her. The fomentation of Indian attacks upon our southwestern frontier by Spain, to say nothing of her stubborn attitude regarding

¹ Jefferson, *Writings*, I. 216; *Works*, ed. Washington, III. 534.

² Jefferson, *Writings*, VI. 206.

³ Jefferson to Madison, June 23, 1793, *Works*, III. 591.

⁴ Jefferson to Madison, May 19, 1793, *Works*, III. 562.

the Mississippi, had led the government to serious protests in the fall of 1792, and by the early summer of 1793 war seemed inevitable.¹ Washington asked of Knox,² in the middle of June, information regarding the Spanish strength in Florida to provide for the event of embroilment; and Jefferson wrote Monroe at the end of that month that war with Spain was absolutely inevitable.³ As early as the autumn⁴ of 1792 Jefferson had expressed his apprehension that Spain and England had a common understanding on the frontiers of the United States; and the declaration of war by England and Spain against France, together with the complaints of English intrigues among the Indians by our settlers on the Northwest did not tend to lessen the apprehension. In short, Genet's opportunity was an ideal one.

But almost from the first he alienated the President and even rendered the support of his friends difficult. He found Washington cold and impassive. He asked in vain that the United States should anticipate the payment of their debt to France (about \$2,300,000) and he engaged, in conformity with his instructions, to accept certificates to be expended among the various states for supplies and munitions of war. These were to be devoted, in part, to the provisioning of the French islands; but it needs no penetration to perceive that the plan was admirably suited to cover all kinds of expenditures from this fund among the frontiersmen for the purposes of the expedition. The federal government declined the proposition, and Genet soon practically abandoned his effort to win the administration, and turned to intrigues.

On his arrival he found awaiting him the letter of George Rogers Clark, written February 2, 1793, from the Falls of the Ohio.⁵ In this letter the frontier leader recounted his services, his investigations into Spanish defences in the Mississippi valley, his possession of friends in those places, and his relations to the Indians. He declared that with four hundred men he could expel the Spaniards from upper Louisiana, and with eight hundred execute the same operation upon New Orleans. He asked naval assistance of two or three frigates and three thousand pounds sterling for the expedition.⁶ Genet also received, a few days after his arrival at Philadel-

¹ Jefferson to Carmichael and Short, October 14, 1792, *Works*, III. 474.

² Washington to Jefferson, June 14, 1793, Washington's *Writings*, XII. 297.

³ Jefferson, *Works*, IV. 6.

⁴ Jefferson to Washington, September 9, 1792, *Works*, III. 459.

⁵ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 967, 971.

⁶ Another draft, in the Clark MSS. (*ibid.*, p. 967) dated February 5 or 3 (for the date shows emendation), proposed to raise fifteen hundred men out of Kentucky, Cumberland, the Holston settlements and the Illinois. As many more French of the Spanish settlements would flock to his standard. With the first he could take Louisiana, begin-

phia, two memoirs from André Michaux,¹ the French botanist, to whom Jefferson had in January of that year given instructions in behalf of the American Philosophical Society for the transcontinental exploration which he proposed.² But while Genet was holding his first conference with Jefferson, Michaux was engaged in drawing up his observations on the French colonies in America for a different kind of exploration.

The month of June was a busy one for the French minister. Finding Michaux's exploring tour a convenient cover for his own designs, he selected him as his agent to go to Kentucky, and he conferred with John Brown, the Kentucky congressman,³ who gave Michaux letters of introduction to Governor Shelby of Kentucky, and to George Rogers Clark. Genet wrote to Lebrun on the nineteenth of this month⁴ that in spite of "old Washington," who "had hindered his progress in a thousand ways," he had won popular enthusiasm, and was secretly pressing for the calling of Congress, where he expected a majority. In the meantime, he is provisioning the Antilles, exciting the Canadians,⁵ arming the Kentuckians and preparing an expedition by sea to second their descent upon New Orleans. The week before this letter, he had received a memorial from DePauw, a Kentucky merchant,⁶ familiar by his trading voyages down the Mississippi with the forts held by Spain on the route, and who had just come from New Orleans. DePauw related in a paper written about 1808 that on the twentieth of April, 1793, he had taken part in a French dinner party in New Orleans, at which plans for a descent on New Orleans from Kentucky were concocted.⁷

ning with St. Louis, and with further aid he could take Pensacola and, if Santa Fé and the rest of New Mexico were desired, he knew their avenues; and all of Spanish America with its mines would follow. He planned to expatriate himself: "My country has proved notoriously ungrateful for my services and so forgetful of those successful and almost unexampled enterprizes which gave it the whole of its territory on this side of the great mountains, as in this, my very prime of life, to have neglected me." Compare also the unsigned memoir in *Report of the American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 972.

¹ *Proceedings of American Philosophical Society*, 1889, Michaux's Journal, with biographical introduction, and bibliographical references.

² Compare Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, December 4, 1783 (52 Clark MSS., 93, printed on p. 673, post,) proposing the exploration to him, and see Turner, *Indian Trade in Wisconsin*, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, IX., pp. 18 ff.

³ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 982, 983.

⁴ Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 37, fo. 431.

⁵ On the French intrigues in Canada see *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1891, 1894, and Dorchester's proclamation of November 26, 1793, in *Philadelphia Gazette*, March 6, 1794.

⁶ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, pp. 977, 1002 and 1102. Charles De Pauw is said (*Representative Men of Indiana*) to have come out with LaFayette. His grandson was the benefactor of DePauw University.

⁷ He says that Colonel John "Blane" of Lincoln and John Speed of Bullet County, Kentucky, were present. *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 1103.

The correspondence of Governor Carondelet, of New Orleans, with his government¹ shows that French intrigues were then in progress in that city, and that he had reason to fear an insurrection. Indeed, in the July following, Carondelet reported the expulsion of sixty-eight French suspects from New Orleans, and he was inquiring into mysterious gatherings, outside the city.² He wrote: "It is whispered by some that in a few months the French will be here. For my part I can affirm that if (which may God forbid) the arms of Spain and of her allies were to suffer any drawback, or if some four frigates were to present themselves here with 1200 French troops there would arise a faction in this city in favor of the Convention which would cause great havoc and perhaps the loss of the province. My small garrison and the faithful vassals of the king are resolved to achieve impossibilities and to die arms in hand; but unless the 300 men lacking to this regiment are sent from Spain by the end of the year we shall lose even this honorable consolation, since for the protection of the most necessary posts and for avoiding a surprise, the men remaining are hardly sufficient, . . . while those previously received are of such a bad character that the prisons are continually filled and but for the adoption of extreme penalties against the delinquents in these circumstances, two-thirds of the regiment would be in prison, and we should remain without any troops. To these important reasons must be added the fears inspired in us by the very disquieting movements of the Americans settled in the West, against whom I cannot oppose sufficient forces in case of any hostility from them."³ He states further that owing to the withdrawal of the troops that had come from Havana, the New Orleans garrison scarcely amounted to 700 men, and 920 were employed in twenty-one detachments distributed over more than 600 leagues.

This apprehension of the governor of Louisiana and West Florida was amply confirmed by the statements of De Pauw and other informants in regard to the weakness of the Spanish posts and the ease of taking them.⁴ Most of the plans against New Orleans proposed to leave St. Louis unassailed, to be taken after the lower river was secured. Below the confluence of the Ohio with the Mississippi

¹ *Id.*, 974.

² Draper Collection, 42 Clark MSS., I.

³ Carondelet to Alcudia, July 3, 1793. *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 996.

⁴ See *American Historical Review*, III. 497; and *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 972. Carondelet's description of his posts and preparations for defence in 1793 and 1794 is in *American Historical Review*, II. 475. General Collot in the service of France visited these posts in 1796, and his description of them, with an excellent atlas, giving plans of each, is in his *Journey in North America*.

the first post was that of New Madrid, or L'Anse à la Graisse, where a captain and twenty to forty men with ten cannon were reported. The fort, it was thought, could easily be taken, or passed in the night. Chickasaw Bluff, or Écores à Margot, was as yet unoccupied by a fort, but the Spaniards suspected the Americans of the design of securing that point. Walnut Hills, or Nogales (now Vicksburg), the site of O'Fallon's projected Yazoo colony, was begun in 1790 to resist that project. It was believed to be commanded by neighboring hills, however, and since its garrison of about 100 men were chiefly Frenchmen, its numerous artillery was less to be feared. Below Walnut Hills, as Carondelet admitted, there was nothing to prevent the enemy from reaching the capital. The French settlers were ripe for revolt, and Natches, dominated on all sides, and with American settlers about it, would fall an easy prey. The forts of Manchac and Baton Rouge were in ruins. New Orleans was expected to revolt against the Spanish rule; and a French fleet blockading the mouth of the river would co-operate with the frontiersmen. Such in outline were the plans proposed for the Kentucky side of the expedition. Mangourit was himself engaged in preparing for a descent on St. Augustine from South Carolina and Georgia, with a fleet and 1500 frontiersmen, while another expedition of 2000 backwoodsmen from the southern up-country was to descend the Tennessee to unite its forces with George Rogers Clark.

After his interviews with Michaux, Brown and DePauw, the matter was sufficiently advanced for Genet to sound Jefferson; for if the Secretary of State and leader of the Democratic party could be actively enlisted in the design, its success seemed certain. From what has already been said, it is clear that as early as February, 1793, Jefferson understood that it was the intention of France to free Louisiana. He was opposed to the form at least of the proclamation of neutrality, and he expected war with Spain. On the fifth of July Genet unfolded to him, "not as Secretary of State, but as Mr. Jefferson," the outline of his Kentucky project,¹ as embodied in his instructions to Michaux. He also read his proposed address to the Canadians. Jefferson's minute of the conversation indicates that he understood that the expedition was to rendezvous out of the territories of the United States (he supposed in Louisiana), and that Louisiana was to be established as an independent state connected in commerce with France and the United States. "I told him," said Jefferson, "that his enticing officers and souldiers from Kentucky to go against Spain, was really putting a halter about their

¹ *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 948; Jefferson, *Writings*, I. 235.

necks, for that they would assuredly be hung if they commenced hostilities against a nation at peace with the United States. That leaving out that article I did not care what insurrections might be excited in Louisiana." Jefferson adds that he gave Michaux a letter of introduction to Governor Shelby of Kentucky, changing the original draft at the desire of Genet, so that it introduced him not only as a man of science, but also as having the good opinion of Genet, and commended him to the notice, councils and good offices of Shelby. "His character here persuades me," wrote the Secretary, "that they will be worthily bestowed on him, and that your further knowledge of him will justify the liberty I take of making him known to you." This letter, innocent enough in appearance, was, doubtless by design, left with the date of June 28, ante-dating the second conversation with Genet. It is further elucidated by the letter of this minister to his government, on the twenty-fifth of July. "Mr. Jefferson," he declares, "seemed to me to be quickly sensible of the utility of the project, but he told me that the United States had begun negotiations with Spain on the subject of the demand that the Americans be given an entrepôt below New Orleans and while this negotiation was not broken off, the delicacy of the United States did not permit them to take part in our operations; nevertheless he made me understand that he thought that a little spontaneous irruption in New Orleans could advance the matter, and he put me into connection with several deputies of Kentucky and notably with Mr. Brown."¹

Jefferson's attitude toward the French design is interesting, since his own presidency was rendered illustrious by the acquisition of Louisiana for the United States. "There is on the globe one single spot," he wrote in 1802, "the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans. The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her within her low water mark. . . . From that day we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."²

But Jefferson's position in 1793 is less easy to explain, partly because it is doubtful how far he understood the ulterior designs of France to hold Louisiana and detach the West; partly because the policy of aggressive territorial acquisition by that power was the work of the succeeding years, and Jefferson's own nationalism was to a considerable degree the work of his presidency; and partly also, because his views of Genet's personality changed rapidly.

¹ Genet then recounts the assistance given him by the latter in advice and influence. *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 982, n. 2.

² Jefferson to Living-ton, April 18, 1802.

Genet himself wrote in the succeeding autumn¹ that, in the beginning, Jefferson seemed disposed to second his views, and gave him useful ideas of the men in position ; nevertheless, he says that he noted in his official declarations a sort of reserve which convinced him that Jefferson was aiming to keep in place whatever happened, and he finally found himself deserted by him. Jefferson on the other hand came to know that Genet's desire was to force the Americans into war on the side of France, contrary to his professions, and that he did not promise everything and ask nothing, as he had at first supposed. The truth seems to be that, in the beginning, Jefferson believed that motives of policy coincided with his friendliness for France, and that in the probable event of war against Spain the freedom of Louisiana by French assistance was not to be rejected. He was not yet dispossessed of his illusions with respect to French disinterestedness. By a protest against the use of Kentucky to violate our neutrality, he saved his official conscience, at least; but he did not break with Genet. He wrote the letter of introduction for Michaux,² and he was left in a position to "watch events." Genet's actions, however, soon compelled Jefferson to abandon him. Even before this interview, Jefferson wrote Monroe that he did not augur well of the mode of conduct of the new French minister, and he was aiming to disabuse him of the idea that he had an appeal from President and Congress to the people. The affair of the *Little Democrat* immediately after the interview led Jefferson to declare : "his conduct is indefensible by the most furious Jacobin. I only wish our countrymen may distinguish between him and his nation."³ And indeed the Jacobinical forces themselves, which had come into power in France in June, did not desire to defend him. Soon Deforgues' letter⁴ was on its way, in which the new Minister of Foreign Relations, foreseeing the tendency of his course, pointed out in severe terms that he was instructed "to treat with the *government* and not with a *portion of the people*," and not to exercise *pro-consular* powers in a *friendly* nation. Referring to the criticisms on Washington in Genet's dispatches, he says : "Deceived by a false popularity you have alienated from yourself the only man who could be for us the

¹ Genet to Minister, October 7, 1793, Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 38, fo. 402.

² Later he seemed desirous to conceal the significance of this letter. See *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 933.

³ Jefferson, *Works*, IV. 19. Genet wrote on the twelfth of August that he would publish his correspondence with Jefferson, "a man endowed with good qualities but weak enough to sign what he does not think and defend officially measures which he condemns in conversation and anonymous writings." Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 38, fo. 182; De Witt, *Jefferson*, 530.

⁴ July 30, 1793, Archives, États-Unis, Vol. 38, fo. 107; De Witt, *Jefferson*, 525.

organ of the American people." He sneers at Genet's professions of having already armed the Kentuckians and Canadians and awaits the developments of these measures, but observes that an expedition by sea prepared at Philadelphia against New Orleans would openly violate American neutrality and render Genet odious to the government; and finally he charges him to gain the confidence of the President and Congress. Genet, in the thick of party contests, took little heed of the warning, and rushed boldly on to meet his fate by the appeal to the people against Washington.

It is not the purpose of the present paper to relate the progress of the preparations for the expedition that followed.¹ The downfall of the Girondins led naturally to the disavowal and recall of Genet. Soon after arriving, Fauchet, his successor, issued a proclamation (March 6, 1794) terminating the expedition. It came when Clark and his friends were actively preparing for the descent of the Mississippi, and when troops were already gathered at the St. Mary's and along the frontier of Georgia for an attack on St. Augustine. Had the proclamation been delayed, the attempt would certainly have been begun. What the result of such an attempt would have been, with the Spaniards fully informed, the military forces of the United States under orders to oppose it, and the leading friends of Genet already alienated, need not be considered here.

The very extensiveness of the original project, the succession of unforeseen changes in the government and the military situation of France, but above all the character of Genet and of Washington worked to render it abortive. Enough has been said to reveal the fact that this attempt was an important chapter in the history of the Mississippi Valley in its relations to the future of the United States, of France and of Spain. It is, in fact, a chapter in the long struggle of the people of that Valley to hold the approaches to their great river—a struggle that is not yet ended.

FREDERICK J. TURNER.

¹ See *American Historical Review*, III. 490; *Report of American Historical Association*, 1896, p. 930, and the documents to be published in the same *Report* for 1897, on the expedition in the Carolinas and Georgia.